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NIE "use" survey

1 February 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Proposal for a Survey of the Use of NIE's

1. After four years experience with the production of national intelligence estimates, the Board of National Estimates believes that it would be highly useful to conduct an informal survey of the use of national estimates by our many consumers. Through its representation on the NSC and NSC Planning Board, CIA is continually in touch with how NIE's are used in support of NSC policy papers, but NIE's also go to an additional wide audience including many Washington agencies, overseas commands, diplomatic posts, CIA Senior Representatives and even certain foreign governments. We believe that it would be worthwhile to ascertain the extent to and manner in which NIE's are used by such consumers, as part of our continuing effort to make national estimates responsive to the consumer's needs. As you know, CIA does not itself control the onward dissemination of many of these estimates, which are delivered en bloc to the other IAC agencies for them to circulate further at their discretion.

2. In the Board's view a survey of this nature would facilitate a review of the key questions of: (1) whether our NIE's are being circulated either on too restricted a basis or more widely than desirable; (2) who are the real ultimate consumers; (3) how extensively NIE's are actually used by these consumers; and (4) the extent to which, as presently written, they meet these consumers needs. Depending upon the results of such a survey, it might serve as the basis for subsequent recommendations by the Board of National Estimates to you and the IAC.

3. We believe that for the survey to be most effective it should be carried out through a series of interviews with a representative sample of the ultimate consumers of NIE's. Such interviews could be scheduled with middle level officials of other agencies and need not involve interviewing cabinet level officers. Because the interviewees should be fully familiar with the NIE process and past NIE output, we believe that the interviews could best be conducted by senior staff members of O/NE. In our view CIA has adequate authority to conduct such a survey within CIA's responsibility under the National Security Act of 1947 "to provide for the appropriate dissemination" of national intelligence and for the "coordination" of intelligence activities.

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4. We believe that, while the survey should be conducted by O/NE itself, the IAC would welcome such a review of NIE use and distribution provided that the results were made available to them.

5. ~~RECOMMENDATION~~: That the Director of Central Intelligence, after consultation with the IAC, authorize the Board of National Estimates to conduct a survey of the dissemination and use of national intelligence estimates, and to report thereon to the IAC.

SHERMAN KENT  
Assistant Director  
National Estimates

Attachment: Draft Memorandum to the IAC

O/NE:

Distribution:

- 1 - Assistant Director for Collection and Dissemination
- 2 - AD/NE

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